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THE DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SUBSPECIES OF *PITUOPHIS MELANOLEUCUS* FROM LOUISIANA

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THE examination of a large series of snakes of the genus *Pituophis*, in the course of a revision of that group, reveals two specimens of *P. melanoleucus* from Louisiana, which apparently differ in coloration and markings from the three recognized subspecies (*P. m. melanoleucus* from New Jersey and the Carolinas, *P. m. mugitus* from Florida, and *P. m. lodingi* from Alabama). The writer is indebted to Mr. Percy Viosca for permission to study and describe this form.

Pituophis melanoleucus ruthveni, new subspecies[1]

Diagnosis.—This form is to be distinguished from all the other subspecies of *Pituophis melanoleucus* by its coloration and the larger number of dorsal spots. Thus, *P. m. melanoleucus* is white with from 30 to 37 black spots on the body and tail: *P. m. mugitus* is pied rusty brown and white; the dorsum

[1] Named in honor of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven.

of the anterior half of the body is almost uniformly brown with the spots indistinguishable in most specimens; the spots of the posterior half become decidedly red approaching and on the tail; and the spots on body and tail, when distinguishable, do not exceed 39: *P. m. lodingi* is uniformly black above and slate grey below: *P. m. ruthveni* has the dorsum pale brown with 50 chocolate brown spots on the body and tail.

Type.—U. S. Nat. Mus. No. 76278. Adult male, collected at Longleaf, Louisiana, by W. D. Harris, March 24, 1927.

Description of type.—The scales are keeled with the exception of the seven outer rows of either side. The squamation is as follows: scale rows 31–33–25; ventrals 219; caudals 59; supralabials 9–8, the fifth entering the eye on the right side, the fourth on the left; infralabials 15; preoculars 1; postoculars 4; loreal present; rostral twice as long as wide, penetrating two thirds of the distance between the internasals; frontal undivided.

The dentition is as follows: mandibular teeth 18; maxillary teeth 15; palatines 9; pterygoids 8.

The ground color of the dorsum is pale brown, becoming progressively paler to white posteriorly. A mid-dorsal series of dark chocolate brown spots numbering 41 on the body and 9 on the tail is present; the spots are largest in the mid-region of the body. Additional smaller dark brown spots are present on the sides of the body, forming two rather indefinite alternating rows on either side of the mid-dorsal series on the anterior part of the body. These smaller spots fuse to form one lateral series on either side posteriorly, and fuse with the mid-dorsal spots just anterior to and on the tail. The belly is white with a series of rectangular dark brown spots at either end of the ventral scutes, and numerous additional spots are scattered irregularly between. The spots of the lateral series are one to two scutes in width and are separated by two to five scutes. The under side of the tail is irregularly spotted with brown.

Total length 1,520 mm.; tail length 200 mm.; tail length 12.5 per cent of the total length.

Remarks.—The second specimen of this form is from the same locality as the type. It differs in having scale rows 31–31–22, ventrals 218, caudals 60, supralabials 8, infralabials 14, and postoculars 3. The specimen is so badly preserved as to render the number of dorsal spots indistinguishable, but the general scheme of coloration closely resembles that of the type specimen.

This form is morphologically as well as geographically intermediate between *P. sayi sayi* and the more eastern subspecies of *P. melanoleucus*, and is nearer to *P. s. sayi* in the number of scale rows, shape of the rostral, and proportionate tail length than are the other subspecies of *melanoleucus*.